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## **New Zealand**

## **Organic Products**

## **New Zealand Organic Policy Update 2000**

Approved by:

**David Young**

**U.S. Embassy**

Prepared by:

Rachel Monk

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**Report Highlights: The New Zealand Government is in the process of establishing an Official Organic Assurance Programme for organic produce exported to the European Union. The development of an official programme should simplify access for organic products exported to the European Union as it will avoid the need for New Zealand exporters to obtain import licenses from individual states within the European Union.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Wellington [NZ1], NZ



With the growing demand from consumers concerned that food production seems less natural and less healthy than it used to be, the organic industry, both in New Zealand and internationally, has become a thriving commercial activity.

The New Zealand Government reports that over the past six months, it has done significant work to protect New Zealand exports of organic food products against the possibility of trade barriers and punitive tariffs.

The New Zealand Minister of Trade and Agriculture recently reported that:

Both the European Union and Japan have passed legislation that requires official government or government-backed certification that foods claiming to be organic have in fact been produced in accordance with the appropriate standards. The European and Japanese initiatives are being taken to stop fraudulent claims of organic status. There is no suggestion at all that New Zealand is involved in any misuse of the term for its export produce.

At the request of the local Organic Products Exporters Group Inc, (OPEG) and with the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is in the process of establishing an Official Organic Assurance Programme for organic produce exported to the European Union. The development of an official programme should simplify access for organic products exported to the European Union as it will avoid the need for New Zealand exporters to obtain import licenses from individual states within the European Union.

New Zealand's organic produce exports to the European Union are currently accompanied by assurances issued by organisations approved by individual Member States within the European Union under a derogation provided for in their regulations. That situation can continue until 2005. However, after this time, New Zealand's exports of organic produce to the European Union must be accompanied by an official assurance issued by the New Zealand government.

While 2005 is some way off, the benefits in terms of simplifying access arrangements and providing greater long term security over those arrangements have been recognised by OPEG in their request that MAF establish and implement an official programme as soon as possible. Under the programme MAF will be issuing official government-to-government assurances for consignments of organic product. Certification of farms or operators for compliance to the relevant organic standard will continue to be done by Third Party Agencies, approved by MAF.

To date, the initial development of the official programme has focused on products of plant origin. The programme will be further developed and refined over the coming months to include products of animal origin (including dairy products), before being submitted to the European Commission with a request for Third Country Listing. This Third Country Listing process will involve a desktop review of the documentation setting out MAF's official programme, followed by an in-country assessment by EC organic experts.

MAF is hopeful that the Third Country Listing process will have been completed in time for the

official programme to commence in March 2001. Once MAF's official programme is approved by the EC, New Zealand's organic produce will be able to enter all Member States without the requirement for individual "derogations" to be issued, provided of course that the produce is accompanied by a MAF official organic assurance.

The MAF programme has been designed so that other market requirements can be readily accommodated, should other countries require organic produce to be accompanied by a Government assurance in the future.

A watching brief is being maintained by both MAF and MFAT on market access requirements for organic products in other countries. Japan is using the CODEX Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling, and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods as a basis for its own national standard. The Japan standard is currently focusing on plant products only. Negotiations are underway with the Japanese Government on ways of meeting the standard.